



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Stourbridge College

January 2012

SR 024/12

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ISBN 978 1 84979 481 7

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme; instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body/ies as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of Stourbridge College carried out in January 2012

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the College's management of its higher education provision is enhanced through the creation of, and recruitment to, the new post of Director of Higher Education and the formation of the Higher Education Academic Standards Group
- the arrangements for co-teaching, staff development and the active involvement of the link tutor in the HND Sports Coaching which make the partnership with the University of Worcester strong and effective
- the emphasis on staff development activities specifically focused on the needs of higher education, including a significant number of staff who are being supported to achieve a master's level qualification, notably within the HND Sports Coaching team
- the variety of teaching and learning methods used, especially for day release students, and the accessibility and expertise of staff enhance students' learning experience.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- continue to keep the system of annual course monitoring under review to ensure that it remains fit for purpose for higher education courses, and to ensure that it maintains its current focus on individual courses
- clarify and finalise the protocols it is establishing to ensure that all materials intended as public information are current, complete and accurate, and regularly review their implementation.

The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- create a plan to meet the needs of all staff working with higher education students that disseminates and reinforces the Academic Infrastructure
- continue to review its college-wide Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy to ensure its appropriateness for higher education with regard to such matters as teaching and learning, assessment, internal verification, class observation, and staff development, and that these elements are consistently implemented.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Stourbridge College (the College). The Summative review team (the team) conducted the initial review in October 2011 and returned to the College for a second visit in January 2012. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of Wolverhampton, and the University of Worcester. The review was carried out by Mrs Viki Faulkner, Mr Daniel Morgan (reviewers), and Ms Penny Blackie (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and its awarding bodies, and meetings with staff, students and awarding bodies. The College did not elect to have a Developmental engagement because at the time of planning the review, there were fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

3 Stourbridge College was formed in 1974 by the amalgamation of Foley College and Stourbridge College of Art. The College's mission is 'Unlocking Talent, Creating Futures'. The College primarily serves the Dudley Borough although some students travel from as far away as Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, and Kidderminster. Dudley is predominantly urban with a population of 300,000. There are areas of significant socioeconomic deprivation within the Borough, some of the most deprived wards being situated in the Brierley Hill and Lye areas. The College offers a diverse range of courses, covering the majority of sector subject areas for all age groups and levels of ability. Its training arm, Business Skills, provides a training facility for local businesses and employers. A total of 8,691 students study at the College which has six centres. Three of these centres offer higher education provision; the Hagley Road Centre, the Advanced Technology Centre, and the Longlands Centre which moved to a new build in Brierley Hill in September 2011. Higher education is an important part of the College's strategy to widen participation and encourage lifelong learning among the local community and working population. The College offers level 4 and 5 programmes to 161 students in creative industries, sports coaching, construction, information technology, and teacher training (amounting to 113 full-time student equivalents), spread across three curriculum directorates and Education and Professional Development. Twenty full and part-time staff teach on higher education courses.

4 The higher education awards funded directly and indirectly by HEFCE are listed below, beneath their awarding body, with full-time equivalent numbers of students for 2011-12 in brackets.

Edexcel

- HND Computing (23)
- HND Fine Arts (6.5)

University of Wolverhampton

- HNC Building Services (12.5)
- HNC/D Civil Engineering (10.5)
- HNC Construction (13.5)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTTLS) (9)

University of Worcester

- HND Sports Coaching (38)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

5 The College offers higher education qualifications awarded by two regional higher education partners, the University of Worcester and the University of Wolverhampton, through franchise and recognition agreements. The work with Worcester is co-taught across the University and College sites, whereas with Wolverhampton the delivery is all within the College. The remaining provision is made up of two higher national courses directly funded by HEFCE and validated through Edexcel. The responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are clearly identified in the University of Wolverhampton's Memorandum of Cooperation and the University of Worcester's Partnership Agreement. The Universities' procedures have all been produced with reference to the Academic Infrastructure and are reviewed on a rolling basis to ensure their continuing alignment.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6 The College is seeking to develop higher education provision strategically, in partnership with local universities, to meet local needs through the maintenance and development of the established progression routes and curriculum offer. The most recent changes to the provision are the withdrawal of the HND Textile Design due to declining numbers, and the expansion of provision within other curriculum areas with existing franchise partners. These include the planned delivery of a part-time Foundation Degree in Early Years, franchised from the University of Worcester. Despite promotion, insufficient recruitment means that this course will not run during 2011-12. A further 15 part-time HNC places in construction, civil engineering and building services from the University of Wolverhampton have become available from September 2011. The College is exploring a number of other options with Coventry University and the University of Wolverhampton, including accreditation of small units of learning, the introduction of foundation years, and further access to university facilities and teaching. The College is delivering higher level apprenticeships in construction and believes there are opportunities to expand further into this area of higher education. To assist the management of the higher education provision, the College has created a new post of Director of Higher Education.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

7 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. College staff facilitated focus groups and students made use of the outcomes, module feedback and other surveys to prepare a written submission. This information was helpful to the team as were the two student meetings held during the visit.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

8 Clear monitoring cycles are in place at course level, where day-to-day management of academic standards is the responsibility of course leaders. Programme area managers have responsibility for the effective operation of higher and further education within the directorate and support course leaders. The management of higher education is integrated into the overall College structures for monitoring and reporting. Course leaders report to programme area managers who, in turn, report to assistant principals. Assistant principals, along with the Director of Higher Education and the Director of Quality and Professional Development, attend the Curriculum and Quality Group, chaired by the Vice Principal for Standards and Curriculum. Fortnightly meetings of this group provide the main forum for monitoring overarching issues concerning higher education, although its remit also covers further education. The group has been responsible for the production of the Higher Education Strategy and provides a direct line of communication to the Executive Group.

9 All courses follow an annual monitoring cycle standardised across further and higher education. The annual monitoring procedures of the two university awarding bodies supplement the internal processes in the case of the HND Sports Coaching and the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). Edexcel courses complete annual course reviews using standard college proformas. External examiners' reports inform annual course monitoring reports, as do centrally produced course data and student feedback. The course reviews in construction for 2009-10 were all identical and did not focus on issues related to the separate courses within the area. The College has recently reviewed the format for annual course reviews, and the team considers that the quality of 2010-11 reports in the construction and built environment area is greatly enhanced compared with those produced in 2009-10. It is considered advisable that the College continues to keep the system of annual course monitoring under review to ensure that it remains fit for purpose for higher education courses, and to ensure that it maintains its current focus on individual courses.

10 The Higher Education Strategy states that a key aim is to 'sustain and develop this core part of the business'. In pursuance of this aim the College has taken steps to strengthen the management of higher education through the recent appointment of a Director of Higher Education and the creation of the Higher Education Academic Standards Group. This group, led by the Director of Higher Education, provides the College with a new forum in which to focus on issues specific to higher education, improve consistency, and to review and share good practice across directorates. It will continue to develop the engagement of staff with the Academic Infrastructure, and take forward the findings resulting from the IQER process. The team considers as good practice the enhancement of the College's management of its higher education provision through the creation of, and recruitment to, the new post of Director of Higher Education and the formation of the Higher Education Academic Standards Group.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

11 The College engages with the Academic Infrastructure through the validation, delivery and evaluation of the higher education programmes offered in partnership with its awarding bodies. The College participates, as appropriate, in the validation and approval procedures of all awarding bodies. College staff from the HND Sports Coaching course are actively involved in the work towards revalidation of the current programme. They also take responsibility for regular reviews of individual modules and work collaboratively with the awarding body to establish minor module modifications. Staff on the Higher National Diploma and Certificate courses in the computing, construction and fine arts areas work with Edexcel specifications.

12 The awarding bodies are responsible for programme specifications and learning outcomes and, as in the nature of franchised and recognised courses, the College adopts the partner universities' content. Although the awarding bodies are also responsible for the appointment of external examiners, the College is clear about its own roles and responsibilities within this process, and how external examiner reports are received and feed into the College's Quality Improvement Cycle. Course evidence files clearly demonstrate course leaders' understanding of how the higher national courses map across to relevant subject benchmark statements. The College is in the process of mapping the *Code of practice* against its own practices and will benefit from extending this into areas such as admissions.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of awarding bodies?

13 The College has formal partnership agreements with both university awarding bodies as well as a standard centre agreement with Edexcel covering the directly funded higher national awards. These clearly set out the responsibilities of both parties with regard to student assessment and other matters, such as the achievement of intended learning outcomes and curriculum design. The College has little opportunity to design its own units in these franchised or Edexcel programmes. Course and module leaders on Edexcel programmes are responsible for the design of assessments that will test the students' achievement of the prescribed learning outcomes. College staff assess student work in line with awarding bodies' requirements and the *Code of practice*. External examiners confirm that assessments are relevant and that students are achieving at appropriate levels. The external examiner for HND Fine Arts reports that the documentation to support assessment is 'excellent'. The team noted an improvement in achievement levels in the last year.

14 Students confirmed that staff provide prompt and detailed written feedback relating directly to the achievement of the module learning outcomes. They are clear about assignment deadlines and awarding body requirements for extenuating or mitigating circumstances.

15 The College has a standardised internal verification policy. This policy is used by all College courses, unless it is overridden by the requirements of the awarding bodies, as in the HND Sports Coaching and the teacher training courses. All assignments are verified prior to distribution, and the outcomes are recorded using College documentation. This provides an effective system for ensuring that an appropriate range of assessment methodologies is adopted and that all learning outcomes are covered. There is clear evidence on most courses of the effectiveness of this system for ensuring maintenance of standards. The construction team and their external examiner raised an issue relating to the

time available to undertake internal verification. As a result, the College set aside a weekly allowance of time for verification, and introduced a robust mapping system to ensure adequate coverage of all students and modules on the courses.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards?

16 The College has an appropriate induction procedure for all new staff, who are provided with a mentor on appointment. Staff who do not hold a teaching qualification, or who need to raise their qualification levels to work on a higher education course, receive support from the College to gain the appropriate award.

17 Programme area managers allocate staff to course teams. However, the course leader has responsibility for ensuring that the staff team meets the awarding body requirements. In line with the partnership agreement with the University of Worcester, when a new member of staff is allocated to the HND Sports Coaching, the course leader ensures that he or she achieves Registered Lecturer Status before being able to commence teaching.

18 The College is committed to offering opportunities to ensure the maintenance of standards through its staff development and training policy. Where issues are raised by external examiners or through student feedback, there is clear evidence that these are addressed and that staff members are supported appropriately. Staff have annual appraisals which help to identify requests for support for further areas of training. The College, in collaboration with the University of Worcester, has been highly supportive of staff seeking to undertake postgraduate study, and this has enhanced the higher education provision.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

19 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 8 and 10. It was evident from meetings with staff that the responsibilities and reporting structures are clear and well understood and that there are planned improvements following the recent appointment of the Director of Higher of Education.

How does the College assure itself that that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?

20 There are mechanisms in place to ensure good communication between the awarding bodies and the College at strategic and operational levels in accordance with the respective agreements. The awarding bodies are confident that the College is fulfilling the agreed responsibilities for ensuring that students receive appropriate learning opportunities through consideration in the approval and review processes. The arrangements for co-teaching, staff development and the active involvement of the link tutor in the HND Sports

Coaching enhances the partnership with the University of Worcester and make it strong and effective. The team considers this to be good practice. Scrutiny by external examiners assures the College that it is fulfilling its obligations to the awarding bodies.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

21 The College engages with the Academic Infrastructure through the design, approval, monitoring and review of courses. Course leaders use awarding body guidance documents to ensure alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. Validation documents, programme specifications and handbooks demonstrate a coherent approach to an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure.

22 The University of Worcester has suggested that the College explore ways to further strengthen and develop the engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The awarding body provides some support and there is evidence that the College is beginning to address this through the establishment of the Higher Education Academic Standards Group, which is starting to share good practice. Staff acknowledged that further work is required to ensure consistency of practice across all courses. The College has carried out a reflective mapping exercise with the *Code of practice* against current practice. However, some staff reported that they did not reflect sufficiently on the *Code of practice* when setting assessments for students. The team considers it desirable that the College should create a plan to meet the needs of all staff working with higher education students that disseminates and reinforces the Academic Infrastructure.

How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

23 The college-wide Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy has clear aims, underpinning objectives and processes, and key outcomes. Class observations and the tracking of student progress are two key elements. The strategy is regarded as an organic document, reviewed and amended annually and subject to scrutiny by the College Executive Group on a termly basis. Although staff were able to articulate different approaches used to teach higher education students, there is limited differentiation for higher education teaching. As a result, it is not clear that the College pays sufficient attention to all aspects of higher education that differ from further education. The team considers it desirable for the College to review its college-wide Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and college policies, to ensure their appropriateness for higher education with regard to such matters as teaching and learning, assessment, internal verification, class observation, and staff development, and that these elements are consistently implemented.

24 The class observation cycle takes place at different stages during the academic year and is coordinated by the Quality and Professional Development Officer. Experienced higher education programme area managers and teaching and learning coaches observe higher education staff to ensure the content is delivered at the appropriate level. Although this is an enriching practice when it works well, the College recognises that it is not fully consistent across all courses and is an area for development.

25 In general, the students are highly complimentary about the quality of higher education teaching. All external examiners meet with a group of students on all courses and their reports reinforce the students' positive comments. There is also evidence of very good staff links with industry through placement units, site visits, and guest lecturers. For example, HNC Construction students visited the newly opened art and design site at several points during the building period. The team also saw photographic evidence of a wide range of opportunities for fine arts students to use external spaces outside the College.

Students appreciate the variety of teaching and learning methods used, especially for day release students, and the accessibility and expertise of staff enhance students' learning experience. This is good practice.

26 The Student Involvement Strategy identifies a strong role for students throughout the College, from course representatives to student governors. HND Sports Coaching students benefit from the University of Worcester's effective scheme of Student Academic Representatives (StARs), and value the opportunity to feedback on their experience. The College uses a variety of ways to capture the 'student voice', which includes the National Student Survey, an externally administered Student Perception of Course Survey, module evaluations, and online contributions to the 'Have Your Say' box on course homepages on the virtual learning environment. The College Executive Group and curriculum teams use the results of student contributions to inform action plans. Student feedback also informs the Annual Evaluation Report which the course leader produces and which captures issues associated with quality. This report leads to an action plan with clear responsibilities and timeframes. Progress against the action plan is monitored by the Programme Area Manager.

How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?

27 Open days, interviews and individual course leaflets, are available for applicants considering a course at the College. In meetings, students stated that they found these useful. The College has a number of policies on admissions, diversity and equality and has recently appointed an Officer for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, to develop them further. All students are screened at entry for additional support needs and this is followed up by course leaders who can refer them to the Student Support service.

28 In line with the College's Student Induction Policy, all students receive an effective induction. The HND Sports Coaching students receive an induction at the College and the University, which students find beneficial. Construction students receive a visit from staff of the University of Wolverhampton to ensure they are enrolled correctly and understand the benefits available to them. At induction, students are made aware of the variety of support services available, which include a counselling service and advice on finance, careers and higher education opportunities. The College provides written information on progression beyond College, and the University of Worcester link tutor organises a seminar on opportunities for sports students.

29 The personal tutorial policy ensures that all students, full and part-time, see a member of staff on a regular basis, weekly in some instances, and receive an agreed record. Students commented favourably upon the formal and informal support offered by the staff. Sports coaching students commented particularly on the accessibility of the Course Leader at both of the sites where they are co-taught. Students also receive oral feedback through the system of regular tutorials which supplements written feedback. The students were very positive about the quality and extent of the feedback following assessment.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

30 Close links with the awarding bodies enable most staff to have ample opportunities to develop appropriate teaching and learning skills. Staff teaching on higher education programmes receive encouragement to take part in the staff development opportunities their awarding body provides. Several lecturers and support staff benefit from reduced or supported fees if they enrol on a course at the partner University. All staff are given time to develop their teaching methods, scholarship, and teaching materials through 10 continuous

professional development days per year, as part of the Institute for Learning arrangements. A newly developed section of the staff intranet, specific to higher education, provides a repository of all relevant materials to support quality assurance and staff development for higher education, and thus contributes to the creation of a higher education culture.

31 The College's higher education strategy is under review. It acknowledges the need to employ staff with appropriate subject specialisms and qualifications in order to teach on higher education courses. Both Universities approve staff qualifications for their courses. A significant number of staff are being supported to achieve a master's level qualification, notably within the HND Sports Coaching team. The team considers the emphasis on such staff development activities specifically focused on the needs of higher education to be good practice. In some areas, the staff are particularly well qualified in their subject specialisms with many years of industrial experience. In art and design, two members of staff are Rome scholars, an unusual and commendable achievement.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

32 The College provides a virtual learning environment to support teaching and learning. Both Universities have their own virtual learning environments, which means that students on most courses have access to two or three different systems. While there is potential for confusion, the College staff explain the choices and benefits clearly and the students expressed no difficulty with this arrangement.

33 Students consider that access to facilities and specialist equipment used on a regular basis is good. They also reported that they have effective access to the library resources. In meetings, staff described the well-established and appropriate process for securing books and journals. Course teams are able to bid for capital projects within a prioritised process. The modern construction facilities provide an excellent learning environment. A new building to house art and design has specialist studios that are fit for purpose, and excellent library resources. Sports coaching students have well-organised opportunities to use the facilities at the University of Worcester, and the College has opened a new gymnasium facility at one of its campuses which will also support these students. The majority of sports coaching students use the library at the University of Worcester in preference to the College library. This has caused some difficulties in accessing key texts but students value having access to both libraries.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

34 The responsibilities for the publication of relevant materials are set out in the respective partnership agreements. The College produces a range of materials relating to the marketing of the higher education portfolio in general, as well as materials specific to each course. General materials include full-time and part-time prospectuses, and an

e-prospectus which covers both further and higher education provision at the College. Course factsheets are available for distribution at recruitment events and on the website.

35 Prospective students are able to access course information easily prior to entry. The dedicated online Higher Education Guide provides essential information on the higher education experience. However, the team saw examples of typographical inaccuracy which could be addressed by closer proofreading. A protocol has been developed to ensure timely review of information to guarantee currency.

36 Students receive useful information about the College support services in booklet and electronic form at induction as well as in the student handbook. Course handbooks and the virtual learning environment provide detailed information, including assessment calendars, and provide links to the awarding body website and virtual learning environment. Clear guidance is provided in handbooks on mitigating circumstances and extensions policies. The College recognises that as the usage of the virtual learning environment progresses, there is a need to ensure consistency in its operation.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

37 The introduction of the newly revised website in November 2011 has enabled the College to revise its content and provided an opportunity to remove content that had become out of date.

38 In response to previously identified inaccuracies, the College has produced a working document: Higher Education Public Information Protocols. This document aims to clarify the procedures for the production and publication of new course information, and the roles of those involved in the management of this area. The Marketing Department is now clearly identified as the gatekeeper of the website. All information is submitted to the Marketing Department from the Director of Higher Education, who has final responsibility for the accuracy of the content. The Marketing Department is responsible for ensuring that information is correct with respect to grammatical detail and house style. Information is then passed to the webmaster for external publication or printing. The team conclude that the new procedures have improved the previous system where a range of staff were able to submit material to the Marketing Department without a formal checking system. The team welcomes the College's acknowledgement that the protocols will benefit from further development, including clarification of common procedures in discussion with the awarding bodies.

39 Students from all courses value the content of the College virtual learning environment and appreciate the student handbooks, assessment briefs, policy and procedures documents, and supporting lecture notes. The College has recently revised its systems to ensure that all curriculum staff now have appropriate permission levels to enable the timely removal of outdated course materials. The construction team has revised its virtual learning environment in line with the College's Information Technology Strategy for Higher Education to provide a higher education homepage that offers easy access to course materials. However, this remains a work in progress and the HNC Building Services pages still contain some out-of-date course materials.

40 The team found that the College has put in place systems that are designed to identify and remedy inaccuracies in public information and ensure that they are rectified in a timely fashion. A number of these systems are new and still under development. The team considers it advisable that the College clarifies and finalises the procedures it is establishing

to ensure that all materials intended as public information are current, complete and accurate, and regularly reviews their implementation.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

41 At the time of the planning of the review, the total number of full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College was fewer than 100, therefore in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

D Foundation Degrees

42 The College has no Foundation Degrees at present.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

43 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in Stourbridge College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel and the Universities of Wolverhampton and Worcester.

44 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the College's management of its higher education provision is enhanced through the creation of, and recruitment to, the new post of Director of Higher Education and the formation of the Higher Education Academic Standards Group (paragraphs 6 and 10)
- the arrangements for co-teaching, staff development and the active involvement of the link tutor in the HND Sports Coaching make the partnership with the University of Worcester strong and effective (paragraph 20)
- the emphasis on staff development activities specifically focused on the needs of higher education, includes a significant number of staff who are being supported to achieve a master's level qualification, notably within the HND Sports Coaching team (paragraphs 18 and 31)
- the variety of teaching and learning methods used, especially for day release students, and the accessibility and expertise of staff enhance students' learning experience (paragraph 25).

45 The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

46 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- continue to keep the system of annual course monitoring under review to ensure that it remains fit for purpose for higher education courses, and to ensure that it maintains its current focus on individual courses (paragraph 9)
- clarify and finalise the procedures it is establishing to ensure that all materials intended as public information are current, complete and accurate, and regularly review their implementation (paragraphs 38 and 40).

47 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- create a plan to meet the needs of all staff working with higher education students, that disseminates and reinforces the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 22)
- continue to review its college-wide Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy to ensure its appropriateness for higher education with regard to such matters as teaching and learning, assessment, internal verification, class observation and staff development and that to ensure that these elements are consistently implemented (paragraph 23).

48 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

49 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

50 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Stourbridge College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's management of its higher education provision is enhanced through the creation of, and recruitment to, the new post of Director of Higher Education and the formation of the Higher Education Academic Standards Group (paragraphs 6 and 10) 	<p>To continue to develop, implement and support the internal delivery of the higher education strategy, quality systems, recruitment, internal progression, and marketing through the Academic Standards Group</p> <p>To further develop a Higher Education culture and drive the College forward into a more effective and profit-making higher education provider</p> <p>Good practice disseminated and shared through</p>	Continuous and ongoing	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Higher Education Academic Standards Group</p>	<p>Recruitment and student targets met</p> <p>Higher Education Academic Standards Group Meetings established</p>	<p>Vice Principal of Students and Corporate Development</p> <p>Curriculum and Quality Group</p>	<p>Student feedback and satisfaction rates via questionnaires and focus groups</p> <p>Feedback from higher education staff surveys and funding partners</p>

	Academic Standards Group					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the arrangements for co-teaching, staff development and the active involvement of the link tutor in the HND Sports Coaching make the partnership with the University of Worcester strong and effective (paragraph 20) 	Continue to develop and monitor effective working relationships with the University of Worcester and explore opportunities to roll out best practice with other partner institutions	Continuous and ongoing	Professional Development Unit and Director of Higher Education	Partnership with the University of Worcester strengthens, demonstrated by partnership review feedback	Director of Higher Education Vice Principal of Students and Corporate Development	<p>Annual Programme Monitoring/ self-evaluation documents</p> <p>Student feedback and satisfaction rates via questionnaires and focus groups</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the emphasis on staff development activities specifically focused on the needs of higher education, includes a significant number of staff who are being supported to achieve a master's level qualification, notably within the HND Sports 	<p>Develop and monitor implementation of an Annual Higher Education Staff Development Plan to ensure best practice continues</p> <p>Implement a Higher Level Skills audit</p>	Annual review	<p>Human Resources Manager</p> <p>Professional Development Unit</p>		Director of Higher Education	Annual Higher Education Staff Development Plan and review

Coaching team (paragraphs 18 and 31)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the variety of teaching and learning methods used, especially for day release students, and the accessibility and expertise of staff enhance students' learning experience (paragraph 25). 	<p>Review the Teaching and Learning Strategy to ensure it meets the needs of higher education provision</p> <p>Establish a higher education student group and/or include higher education students in Student Council to listen and respond to the student voice</p> <p>Randomly sample assignment briefs to ensure quality procedures and continuous improvement</p>	<p>March 2012 onwards</p> <p>February 2012</p> <p>February 2012 onwards</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>Teaching and learning strategy reviewed</p> <p>Higher education group established</p> <p>Lesson observation grade profile of higher education teachers</p>	Vice Principal of Students and Corporate Development	Student feedback and satisfaction rates via questionnaires and focus groups
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to keep the system of annual course monitoring under 	To produce a higher education Self-Assessment Report to report	June 2012	Director of Quality and Professional Development	Higher education Self-Assessment Report produced	College Executive Group	Quality of information provided for higher education

review to ensure that it remains fit for purpose for higher education courses, and to ensure that it maintains its current focus on individual courses (paragraph 9)	annually against core themes, respond to external examiner reports and procedures, and produce effective action plans		Director of Higher Education Course Managers			Self-Assessment Report and feedback on review of Self-Assessment Report process from staff and quality team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify and finalise the procedures it is establishing to ensure that all materials intended as public information are current, complete and accurate, and regularly review their implementation (paragraphs 38 and 40). 	<p>Procedures and protocols for higher education have been revised and have been made public to all staff and partner higher education institutions to review</p> <p>Internal audit of procedures and protocols to ensure continuous improvement</p>	February 2012 onwards	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Communications Coordinator</p> <p>College Internal Auditor</p>	<p>All public information available is current, complete and accurate</p> <p>Positive audit</p> <p>Approval of policies and procedures from partner institutions</p> <p>Gold standard virtual learning environment</p> <p>An informative,</p>	College Executive Group	<p>Positive annual audit of public information</p> <p>Student feedback and satisfaction rates via questionnaires and focus groups</p>

				current and useful higher education shared drive Increased higher education website hits and enquiries for higher education courses		
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a plan to meet the needs of all staff working with higher education students, that disseminates and reinforces the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 22) 	<p>The Higher Education Academic Standards Group to review current quality of higher education policies and staff development framework to ensure it reflects the needs of higher education</p> <p>To use the academic standards group to ensure all current and new staff gain an understanding of all aspects of subject benchmark statements, programme</p>	February 2012 onwards	Director of Higher Education and Quality team	<p>Plan created and implemented</p> <p>Improved lesson observation profile</p>	Vice Principal of Students and Corporate Development	Annual review of higher education delivery; staff continuous professional development access

	specifications, codes of practice, and programme delivery					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to review its college-wide Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy to ensure its appropriateness for higher education with regard to such matters as teaching and learning, assessment, internal verification, class observation and staff development and that to ensure that these elements are consistently implemented (paragraph 23). 	<p>Ensure the alignment of higher education with the College policy on authorising policies and procedures</p> <p>Procedures to be reviewed by the higher education programmes committee (where applicable), to ensure effective mapping to the Academic Infrastructure</p> <p>Work with University partners on the development of a College-based learning and teaching strategy for its higher education programmes</p> <p>Review and update all policies to ensure they fit into the Higher Education remit and are consistently implemented for all Higher Education provision</p>	March 2012 and onwards	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Director of Quality and Professional Development Unit</p>	Procedures reviewed and new strategy developed with partner organisations	Vice Principal of Students and Corporate Development	Annual review of policies and compliance by Higher Education Programmes Committee to ensure continuous improvement

RG 844 04/12

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